

Message Text

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73

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 171603Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8169

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0300

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, NI

SUBJ: BENINESE GOVT ATTEMPTS REPAIR DAMAGE FROM PREMATURE
HAILING OF NIGERIAN COUP

1. THE MIDDAY NEWS BROADCAST ON BENIN'S GOVT-RUN RADIO ON FRIDAY, 13 FEB, HAILED THE NIGERIAN COUP AS BEING THE WORK OF "YOUNG REVOLUTIONARIES". IN THE LOCAL LEXICON, TAGGING ANYTHING "REVOLUTIONARY" INDICATES THE GPRB'S MARK OF APPROVAL. THE GPRB AT THAT POINT THOUGHT THE COUP WOULD SUCCEED.

2. TODAY THE GPRB IS GOING ALL OUT TO TRY TO BACK-TRACK AND REPAIR ANY DAMAGE CAUSED IN ITS RELATIONS WITH NIGERIA. PRES KEREKOU HIMSELF LED THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY TO THE NIGERIAN EMBASSY TO SIGN THE CONDOLENCE BOOK AND LAY A WREATH (AN HONOR NOT EVEN ACCORDED THE CHINESE ON THE DEATH OF CHOU EN-LAI). THE RANKING MINISTER, LT COL OHOUENS HEADED THE OFFICIAL GOVT DEL CONSITING OF ALL MINISTERS. A MASS RALLY WAS ORGANIZED THIS MORNING TO SHOW BENIN'S SOLIDARITY WITH NIGERIA AND TO EXPRESS "INDIGNATION" OVER THE DEATH OF GEN MURTALA MUHAMMED DURING A "PRO-IMPERIALIST" COUP. SPECIAL ENGLISH AND YORUBA LANGUAGE "NEWS" BROADCASTS WERE AIRED AT MIDDAY AND DEVOTED EXCLUSIIVELY TO THOSE MANIFESTATION OF SUPPORT FOR THE FMG. OBVIOUSLY THE BROADCASTS WERE AIMED AT LISTENERS ACROSS THE BORDER.

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3. COMMENT: BENIN'S REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL AND READY PROPAGANDA APPARATUS MAY BECOME THE UNDOING OF THE LONG SOUGHT ASSISTANCE FROM NIGERIA. HOWEVER THE EMBASSY IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE LOCAL NIGERIAN EMBASSY, WITH ITS EXTREMELY LIMITED CAPABILITY IN FRENCH, CAUGHT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FRIDAY BROADCAST. THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE SNOWED BY TODAY'S REPARATORY ACTIONS.

CHESSES

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